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FRANCE AFTER THE REFERENDUM

By Frank C. Hanighen

"France wears its heart on the Left, but its pocketbook on the Right," is an old adage that seems to apply to the results of the recent referendum, on adoption of the new Constitution proposed on April 19.

Emotionally Left, the voters installed a majority of Communists and Socialists in power in the Constitutional Assembly last fall. This spring, those parties tried to put over a Leftist Constitution, devoid of the checks and balances which formerly kept radicals from tinkering with the shopkeeper's bank account and the peasant's well-known sock. A rather definite majority, obviously including many who voted Left six months ago, responded on May 5 with a definite "No". This might well be interpreted as an admonitory "Whoa!"

The picture includes a familiar pattern in French politics which the Communists and Socialists ignored, to their misfortune. The latter erroneously thought that the average Frenchman was permanently fed up with the institutions of President and an Upper Chamber. But the average Frenchman, it turned out, did not want a completely powerless Executive, as projected by the proposed Constitution. He was old enough to recall gratefully how in years past the Senate checked attempts of the Lower House to break down "sound finance". Nor did he relish the new Constitution's airy treatment of the rights of property. "To the Left, to the Left -- but no further!" said a character in a popular French novel, Le Monarque, by Pierre Mille.

Yet, it would be well to emphasize that about 47 per cent of the voters did vote for the proposed organic law. Almost half wanted something new; a new order, new social laws, additional protection for workers, etc. Much in the rejected instrument of government will be retained in the next Constitution which the new Assembly, to be elected in June, will have to frame.

France, in a supreme effort to resolve its political contradictions, is seeking to

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arrive at a solution of the basic problem of our times. Last fall, France voted against "liberty without bread"; this spring, against "bread without liberty". The quest for "liberty and bread" will go on. Events in the coming months will express this spiritual travail, and the forces which contend for power will win or lose as they approach or fall far short of the objective -- to combine security and freedom.

II

What France needs for its rehabilitation, even more than a political formula, is an intellectual formula. Just as Rousseau, the Encyclopedists and Voltaire fertilized the Eighteenth Century French Revolution, so new words and ideas are needed to provide the base for the Fourth Republic, successor to the régime which crumbled to pieces during the last war.

But today there are few signs of positive, hopeful and constructive philosophy. Those who scan the European horizon for signs of a religious revival find little evidence of it in France's intellectual life. Among new writers -- such as Sartre, Camus, Magny -- the philosophy of Existentialism, now to the fore, emerges as an "icy atheism" (see Partisan Review, Spring, 1946). In Sartre, the chief of the new Left Bank clan, the principal result of this philosophy "seems to be an emphasis upon the impotence, or non-existence of the will", says Raymond Mortimer in the London New Statesman and Nation. This is hardly an invigorating influence for new political ideas.

However, four years of German Occupation has given to French thought, even to men like Sartre, a cast which is "résistant" in more senses than one. After liberation, the more vital spirits found a new enemy, "Stalinism", as oppressive as the Germans and Vichy. A century ago "republicans" and "radicals" reacted against the Church with its index expurgatorius. Similarly, progressive intellectuals feel now that the gains of the Résistance and Libération must at least equal in freedom of thought, speech and writing the gains of the great French Revolution. In short, they are in revolt against Communism.

Thus André Malraux, perhaps the most talented novelist in the last decade, and other former Communists and fellow travellers, have turned against the "Mother Church of Moscow". The Paris journal Combat, marked by a bristling independence, is the most prominent medium of this movement. Combat, launched as a Resistance organ, is carrying on resistance to the

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great Moloch which threatens to swallow all the riches, material and spiritual, which are the inheritance of France.

III

The Communist Party in France is not only a force, but a superbly supple organization. It exploits the popular taste for Left labels; the peasant's and the shopkeeper's opposition to "Big Business"; the factory workers' hatred of employers and the bourgeoisie; the feeling of national humiliation and weakness -- "We must have the Ruhr and Rhineland".

Thorez and Duclos, the two leading Communists, know all too well that the bulk of the voters cannot be won by an outright plan for "communism". By clever manipulation of hatreds and emotions, they hope to win enough votes to demand more and more key portfolios in the Cabinet. Their design for the just defeated Constitution was aimed at holding certain Cabinet posts regardless of governmental changes. With these portfolios -- of Interior (Police), Propaganda, Foreign Affairs -- they could infiltrate and maneuver any French government at will.

In foreign policy, the Communist line would bring Soviet influence and troops to the Atlantic, isolating Britain, the Low Countries and Spain. By dividing and ruling, by stirring disorder, Moscow could prepare for an eventual coup d'état, to be aided by Soviet troops.

As for the Socialist Party, it seems to be settling down to a position as the Center between Communists and Rightists. With no protector like the Soviet Union, with no such organization as the Communists and with the looseness of a really democratic party, it faces an uncertain future. The picture of the Socialist Party is that of a Marxist, Second International intellectual appealing to a constituency of well-to-do peasants who are disgruntled over the price of grapes. And these Marxists seem less able than ever to strike the verbal balance between "bread and liberty" necessary to attract wide numbers of voters.

IV

When an old anti-clerical and a young Catholic politician join hands, that is news in France. Such was the case when former Premier Herriot, leader of the old Church-baiting Radical Socialist Party, supported François de Menthon, one of the leaders of the MRP (Mouvement Republicain Populaire), in a strong attack on the projected Constitution. This is a

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typical example of a ferment on the Right that may prove as important as the hugger-mugger of the Communists on the Left.

For over a hundred years, important parts of the French population never in their hearts accepted the Republic and continued wistfully to look backward to the Ancien Régime. Today, descendants of the nobility, and members of the upper bourgeoisie, have swallowed the Republic and find time to defend the French Revolution's Bill of Rights. And little shopkeepers, peasants, petitsrentiers, who for more than a century regarded the priest and the chateau as the principal danger, now look on the Kremlin as a far greater menace.

Is the ancient feud ended, the breach healed? Nobody knows. But all signs indicate a willingness to forget old grudges, fuse and rally to the defense of individual rights agains the danger of the Left. In France today there has arisen an important defensive reaction, a spontaneous rapprochement throughout the French middle-class, both upper and lower strata. This is a social phenomenon of great significance.

New political forms have been created to express this reaction. The PRL -- Parti Republicain de la Liberté -- has taken shape in the past few months, has gathered funds and has enlisted some 30 Rightist Deputies to fight the Communists. Additionally important is the fact that M. Herriot, who can scarcely be called a Fascist, has led his Radical Socialists into a new "Republican Union", to protect "individual liberties and the rights of property". Finally, there is the MRP, fundamentally conservative, but with progressive ideas.

In France, as in other countries when a new idea is lacking -- obviously the case in France -- the people find some man to bridge a dangerous chasm. Thus it was that Clemenceau was chosen to finish the work of the Union Sacrée in World War I; and Poincaré in the late Twenties commanded the support of the disparate blocs to save the franc.

A greater and more difficult task awaits some figure -- Herriot, or de Gaulle, or another. This task would be not only to unite the anti-totalitarian forces for an assault on the French electoral barricade, but to point the way for a European United Front against Communism.

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Not Merely Gossip *A Supplement to* Human Events Vol. III - No. 20

By Frank C. Hanighen May 15, 1946

Publication of news that the United States has requested Britain to cede us three island-bases in the Pacific lifts a mere corner of the curtain concealing a truly grandiose scheme for an American base system which would completely encircle the world.

The United States Government has formally asked Britain for more than a score of military bases located on an arc that resembles the round-the-world air transport route used during the war. The following partial list of sites offers a conception of the magnitude of the project: the Bahamas; Ascension Island in the South Atlantic; four bases in Central Africa; Tripoli in the Mediterranean; Karachi, Agra and Calcutta in India; Rangoon in Burma; Canton, Christmas, Funafuti and Manus islands in the Pacific. In the case of the Pacific Islands and Ascension, the United States wants complete sovereignty. On the other above-named bases, the United States will accept leases.

This proposal has met with no adverse reaction from the United Kingdom, Canada and South Africa, representatives of whose Governments have been meeting with other Dominions in London. But Australia and New Zealand have shown strong opposition to the scheme.

Although the note requesting these bases was filed through State Department channels, it is believed that the armed services provided most of the impetus behind the project. Two reasons are advanced for the latter's attitude: (1) the belief that Britain's weak world position needs substantial bolstering by the United States; and (2) the very natural desire to retain the huge American investment in wartime installations in these spots.

One official, queried as to the possibility of obtaining these bases, said: "If they object to giving them up, take the stand that we will remove all the installations. That is the last thing the British or Australians would like to see." Asked about the chances of manning such an ambitious world network in view of the reluctance of Congress to approve a continuing Selective Service system, another official simply shrugged his shoulders.

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In a highly emotional Senate debate, on May 9, concerning the coal strike, one speech stood out in contrast to the hysterical forensics which marked the record that day. While various Senators, including such a prominent New Dealer as Senator Lucas, wanted immediate legislation "against John L. Lewis", Senator Taft arose and denied that any such legislation was within the province or duties of the Senate. He pointed out that under the Smith-Connally Act the Executive has all the powers that he needs in dealing with this or other labor troubles. That Act is operative during war or until the termination of hostilities has been proclaimed by the President, and this Presidential action has not taken place. Under its provisions, the President can seize the mine properties and operate them. "I think that the basic responsibility for dealing with the present problem must rest on the President of the United States", Taft emphasized in conclusion.

Observers agree that the Senator from Ohio reasoned soundly, and fulfilled his de facto role as leader of the Republican Opposition. Many have wondered why more Republicans did not seek to fix the onus for the present coal situation on the President and the Wagner Act, sponsored by his predecessor. Many seasoned newspapermen share this view, which received vivid expression in the Berryman cartoon, in the Washington Evening Star of May 10, picturing a dark cloud above the White House labelled "Inaction".

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The belated conversion, in recent weeks, of Messrs. Walter Lippman, Gardner Cowles, et al. to the necessity for an economic unification of Germany justifies a reminder to our readers that this publication as early as November 1, 1944, and in frequent articles and pieces thereafter, stressed this as essential to the recovery of Europe. And Mr. Lippman's revelation -- so startling to some Senators -- that the British had been maintaining a German army since V-E day was first reported in this column on January 16.

The trend in American policy turns now to economic rehabilitation of Germany and against the Morgenthau and Potsdam plans. General Clay has issued an embargo on shipments (under the reparation terms) of factory equipment from the American zone to Soviet Russia. Some 24 German factories in our zone had been dismantled in whole or in part; the demolition had begun and had reached various stages. A few had been entirely dismantled and sent to Russia. Clay ordered suspension of further shipments, as well as any further allocations of this equipment to Russia, until full agreement is reached, in the Four-Power Allied Control Council in Berlin, ensuring that Germany will remain as an economic unit.

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The Political Action Committee has not started the 1946 electoral campaign auspiciously. While their candidate for Governor in the Democratic primaries in Alabama was at the head of the list, their choice for the Democratic Senatorial nomination in Ohio trailed; and other primary results indicated at least a very dubious picture of PAC strength. Right after the elections, PAC elements made public a list of 33 members of Congress whom the organization promised to oppose in primaries and elections; in short, a "purge". But PAC headquarters a few days later cancelled this blacklist and announced that they would back candidates, not seek to accomplish a purge. Observers regard this decision as a sign of weakness.

A number of members of Congress expressed satisfaction that their names were on the prematurely released "purge" list, and claimed that this would result in a number of voters, not normally on their side, coming to their support. There may be more in this view than appears on the surface. For it is known in informed circles that an organization, formed to counter the influence of the PAC, will soon emerge from its formative stage and will work in a limited number of constituencies. The name of the organization and details of its plans have not yet been announced.

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Through what is known by the code name of the "Safe Haven Project", the Treasury Department continues to exercise a considerable influence over United States foreign policy. It seeks to perpetuate the policies associated with the name of Mr. Morgenthau long after other departments of the Government have discarded them.

"Safe Haven" is an attempt to root out hidden German assets in neutral countries for utilization in the reparations pool. Under this guise, the Treasury's Monetary Research Division, and its subdivision on Foreign Funds is carrying on what amounts to financial and commercial warfare against such countries as Switzerland, Sweden and Portugal. The American press has given a distorted picture of this phase of our foreign relations; Drew Pearson in his column of May 13 going so far as to liken Switzerland to the "Capone gang". The great contributions of countries like Switzerland and Sweden to the relief of suffering throughout Europe and the reasonable case on which they base their argument with "Safe Haven" remain unmentioned.

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As the Chinese situation deteriorates, criticism of General Marshall is mounting. There is no disposition to doubt his good faith or application to what at best may be an impossible task -- reconciling the contending Chinese factions and bringing peace

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and order to the country to which he is accredited as Ambassador. But experts recently returned from the Far East believe that the General, possibly through his lack of previous experience with Chinese politics, yielded inadvisedly to the Chinese Communists on some important points; such as recognition of Communist rule in disputed areas, the framing of the Constitution, and the discouraging Manchurian situation.

Some Far Eastern specialists fear that General Chou En-lai, Chinese Communist commander, has "sold Marshall a bill of goods". Marshall has reportedly accepted at face value the Chinese Communist claims that they are merely "agrarian reformists" and their denial of any links with Moscow. The current visit of their political boss, Mao Tse-tung, to Moscow should open Marshall's eyes. Those who knew General Marshall when he was Chief of Staff say he was an excellent soldier but that he never showed the slightest knowledge of political situations in the areas in which American troops were involved. At that time, he reportedly took his opinions on political matters from his close friend, Mr. Harry Hopkins, whose pro-Russian and pro-Communist bias was proverbial.

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Senator McCarran of Nevada has introduced a measure which provides that producers of silver shall get 90 cents an ounce, for the next two years, and then $1.29. If this becomes the law, the dream of William Jennings Bryan will have come true. For Bryan, in his first and most sensational campaign for the Presidency in 1896, promised to link silver with gold in stable value relationship; since gold was then the standard of value, Bryan's idea was that the price to silver producers would be $1.29 an ounce as against $20.67 for gold, or a ratio of approximately one to sixteen. "Sixteen to one" became a by-word in that campaign. But there is a possibility that the "silver bloc" in the Senate may surpass Bryan's wildest hopes. If the silver Senators win $1.29, they will presumably go after a silver price of $2.19, in a ratio of one-to-sixteen to the present price of gold, which is $35 an ounce. This would be intolerable for those who manufacture silver, and who now buy the metal at 71 cents an ounce. But it would have a stimulating effect on all kinds of metal mining in the western states. About 80 per cent of American silver is a by-product of the mining of other metal; for instance, of copper.

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While the British Empire is retreating in some areas -- for instance, last week it agreed to withdraw from Egypt -- in others it is making a strong stand. Thus in Malaya, the British are in course of placing the formerly semi-independent Sultanates under the rule of the British Colonial Office, as a unified Crown Colony. This has puzzled some observers because it contrasts with the British tendency to grant at least some independence in neighboring India and Burma.

The reason lies in the paramount strategic and economic importance of Malaya. The Japanese conquest of Singapore, via the Malay peninsula, made it clear that Singapore (at its tip) can be defended only in connection with its hinterland. Also, this area has long provided a large percentage of Britain's vitally needed dollar exchange as a result of the export of vast amounts of rubber and tin to America. With nearby Indonesia, Burma and India in nationalist ferment, Britain could not afford to take any chances.

The present population structure of the country is of assistance in the new British move. Under British rule, Malaya had attracted so many immigrants from China and India that the native Malays are now in a minority in their own country: 1.9 million Malays as against 2.3 million of other origin, mostly Chinese and Indians. By abolishing the Malay Sultanates, Britain did away with the obvious rallying points for Malay nationalism. Also, by giving all inhabitants of the country equal rights as citizens (previously denied the Chinese and Indian immigrants) Britain at once struck a blow for democracy and strengthened its own position as ultimate authority. For the Chinese and Indians will be bound to Britain by gratitude as well as by fear of Malay nationalism which threatens their new status as citizens.

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Notes and Quotes

Dwight McDonald in his Left Independent monthly Politics presents a picture, the dismal outlines of which are all too obvious: "The gloomiest predictions of those of us who opposed the war are being fulfilled with a speech and on a scale which to me at least is quite unexpected. What was the war fought for, according to the Realists?

"The war was fought to secure freedom of speech and freedom from fear -- i.e., freedom from political dictatorship. Russian totalitarianism has direct control of all Eastern Europe, has great influence in Western Europe through its disciplined Communist parties, and is expanding throughout the Orient.

"The war was fought to secure freedom from want. A world food crisis, for which the American government is largely responsible, has materialized. Not for centuries have so many millions of people been faced with actual starvation.

"The war was fought to eliminate Racism. The newspapers constantly tell us that anti-Semitism is more widespread in Europe today than it was under the Nazis; the tragic remnants of the Jews of Europe have one overwhelming desire — to leave their native lands, where they are despised, persecuted, threatened.

"The war was fought above all to lay the foundations for a peaceful world. The Russian and the British empires have been clashing with mounting intensity, and now, with Secretary Byrnes' recent speech and his protests to Russia on Iran and Manchuria, this country enters the conflict. The UNO is already a bad joke; Russia fears the Anglo-American axis, which in turn fears Russian expansionism; both sides are exasperated, intransigent, bellicose. The development of the atomic bomb adds the maximum technological force to the blind nationalistic antagonisms that are conducting us to World War III.

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As forecast in last week's NMG, Governor Alf Landon, in his speech to the Young Nebraska Republicans, rolled down the carpet for the return of the La Follette Progressives to the Republican Party: "I welcome Bob and Phil La Follette and their fellow Progressives back into the Republican Party, not only because their return focuses attention on our party as the sane-sober-liberal party of today, but because of their healthy influence and vigorous championship of a practical progressive program.

"As far as me and mine are concerned it will be a great satisfaction to see a La Follette back on the resolutions committee of the next Republican National Convention — where father and son have rendered such valuable services to the Republican Party and to Uncle Sam for thirty years. . . . While the La Follette proposals might be, and frequently were, rejected by one Republican Convention, subsequent ones accepted most of them and Republican administrations substantially wrote them into law."

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Friedrich Gundolf, famous professor of literature at Heidelberg, made the following penetrating, and prophetic, statement in a Goethe anniversary address in 1932: "Ancient Asia, with its ever recurring atavistic theisms and atheisms, and new America, bedevilled by unhistoric and godless things -- the two powers that will fight the next war — both wish to debase and destroy (by abusing it) that which commenced with Hellas and Rome and lost its senses in the World War."

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The latest perfumer's creation in Moscow is called "Stalin's Breath".

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